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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

20 January 1987

SURINAME: The Libyan Presence

Summary

Head of Government Bouterse's inability to quell the nearly six-month-old insurgency in Suriname [redacted]

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[redacted] the Libyan presence there may have grown over the past few months. Although a good case can be made that the Libyan presence does not extend beyond a dozen or so Libyans--including dependents--who are engaged in normal diplomatic activities, contradictory evidence suggests--and we suspect--that a small number of additional Libyans have arrived in Suriname in recent months to support counterinsurgency operations. [redacted]

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[redacted] if the Libyans are supporting counterinsurgency operations, we would expect to see and be able to verify in the coming weeks [redacted] the number, purpose, and whereabouts of the Libyans. [redacted]

* * *

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Middle America-Caribbean Division, Office of Latin American Analysis. [redacted] Information as of 20 January 1987 was used in the preparation of this paper. Comments and queries are welcomed and should be addressed to Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Division, [redacted]

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[] In order to assess the size and role of the Libyan presence, we divided the available evidence into two categories: [] a normal diplomatic presence and [] the presence of additional Libyans, some or all of whom may be supporting counterinsurgency operations. Attachment I provides a summary of the key evidence and other factors weighed in assessing both possibilities. The evidence is contradictory: a good case can be made for only a normal diplomatic presence and for the presence of a small number of additional Libyans. []

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Case for Normal Diplomatic Presence

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[] The inability of [] the US Embassy in Paramaribo to verify an increased Libyan presence, despite repeated attempts, leads us to conclude that no more than a dozen or so Libyan diplomats and their dependents--supplemented by occasional visitors--are present in Suriname. []

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[] Other key factors supporting the case for only a diplomatic presence are:

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Furthermore, this argument is supported by these considerations:

[] -- Surinamese exiles, most of whom strongly oppose the Bouterse regime, seem to be behind many of the more sensational reports of an increased Libyan presence.

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[] -- [] Amerindians reportedly involved in the massacre of Bush Negro civilians may have been misidentified as Libyans.

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[] -- [] Bouterse is concerned that by drawing too close to Tripoli he might prompt the United States to intervene. []

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Case for Small-to-Moderate Increase

[] [] the presence of at least a small number of Libyans supporting counterinsurgency efforts in Suriname. Our best reporting supporting this case, however, comes from []

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[] -- [] Zanderij airport with 15 Libyans; these Libyans reportedly were met by a Surinamese military officer and bypassed customs. Their whereabouts are unknown.

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[] -- [] as recently as December 4, an eyewitness saw two "definitely" North African soldiers dressed in non-Surinamese combat fatigues enter a store in Moengo.

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[] Such reports apparently have led the attache to conclude that a small contingent of Libyan soldiers may be present, considering the isolation of eastern Suriname and the current military situation. []

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This argument is bolstered by the following considerations:

- [] -- If these additional Libyans have Surinamese passports, their presence could elude the attention of observers at the airport outside Paramaribo or third country transit points.
- The inability of US officials in Paramaribo to confirm an additional Libyan presence does not mean that this rise has not occurred, particularly since the insurgency in eastern Suriname []
- Bouterse's inability to end the insurgency may have made him more susceptible to Libyan aid offers, in our view, particularly if he could conceal such activities.
- [] Libya wishes to expand its influence in Suriname as a way to make greater inroads in the Caribbean. []

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Other information supporting the presence of a small-to-moderate Libyan contingent is circumstantial.

[] -- [] 12 to 14 people speaking an unfamiliar language arrived in Paramaribo on 5 November. These individuals reportedly carried Surinamese passports and bypassed customs. []

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[] -- [] several Libyan visitors took with them to the Libyan People's Bureau a suitcase filled with US dollars, and that officials of the People's Bureau may be engaged in suspicious activities. []

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Case for Large Increase

[] We tend to discount [] that possibly 100 or more Libyans may be present in Suriname. []

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[] Reported estimates of the number of Libyans present have increased significantly since early December, perhaps reflecting the natural tendency of rumors to become exaggerated over time. We believe the prevalence and persistence of these rumors may reflect a deliberate attempt on the part of some French or Dutch officials to misinform the US government in order to encourage a more activist US policy on Suriname. []

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Conclusions

[] [] we suspect that some Libyans--probably a small number--are in Suriname in addition to those engaged in diplomatic functions. [] some direct Libyan involvement in counterinsurgency support to the Bouterse regime, but we lack sufficient credible evidence to determine the extent, purpose, or permanence of the apparent change in Libyan activity in that country. []

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If Libyans supporting counterinsurgency activities are present in Suriname, we would expect to see the following in the coming weeks:

[] an increased Libyan presence pointing to military-related purposes.

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[] -- The persistence of reports of unusually large numbers of Libyans visiting Suriname ostensibly for unspecified or nonmilitary purposes.

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[] []

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[] -- The possible signing of another military agreement (Bouterse apparently backed out of the military pact signed in 1984).

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-- The possible increase in meaningful Libyan financial aid or donations of weapons.

The US Embassy [] should be able to verify any reporting on these indicators.

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Attachment II

Chronology of Reporting on Libyans in Suriname,
1 January 1986-9 January 1987February

6 US Embassy, Paramaribo says Libyan presence consists of 5 diplomats, 10 dependents. 25X1

7 State Department official refutes Dutch press claims of 80 Libyans linked with Libyan People's Bureau (LPB). Dutch ambassador in Suriname cites presence of 21 Libyans. 25X1

19 US Embassy says 1 LPB member departed. 25X1

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August

23 US Embassy says Libyan presence consists of 3 LPB officials and 1 religious instructor augmented by visitors. 25X1

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September

2 US Embassy says Surinamese Prime Minister reports 3-man Libyan economic team left without reaching agreement with Surinamese. 25X1

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October

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

Paramaribo cannot confirm report of 135 Libyans. US Consul General, Martinique reports local contacts say 3 persons--2 alledgedly eyewitnesses--confirmed Libyan arrival; 1 contact said Libyans at military area near Guyana.

[redacted]

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Dutch press reports 45-60 Libyan advisers aiding Bouterse.

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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November

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5

[redacted]

12-14 people speaking unfamiliar language arrived in Suriname from the Netherlands a few weeks earlier. (Most urban Surinamers recognize major Western languages); the group reportedly was met by deputy chief of military police, who took their Surinamese passports and led them through customs.

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[redacted]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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December

6 Suriname exile leader Chin a Sen tells US Embassy officials, Hague that 65 Libyans ([REDACTED]) involved in massacres.

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12 French prefect tells US Consul General he is convinced that more than 100 Libyan military personnel are in the field with Bouterse's forces. that journalists have seen them, [REDACTED]

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14 [REDACTED] says eyewitness told him he had seen 2 Libyan soldiers in Moengo as late as 4 December. DATT says 2-10 (25) Libyan soldiers possible, given remoteness of eastern Suriname and change in military situation.

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16 [REDACTED] says 6 Libyans (26) arrived by plane from Curacao, but no large Libyan presence.

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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Dutch officials tell US Embassy personnel, Hague of unconfirmed report that 21 Libyan military advisers arrived in Suriname on 6 December; although Libyans reportedly arrived on same flight, 15 bypassed customs at Zanderij airport. Surinamese activist tells US Embassy officials, Paramaribo that 60-100 Libyans encamped near Avanavero dam, close to Guyanese border.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] a local businessman says he arrived at Zanderij airport on same SLM flight with 15 Libyans met by Surinamese military officer and taken to unknown location. Dutch press says Bouterse sending home groups of 6-7 Libyans, reducing an alleged original total of 100-200 advisers.

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January

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[REDACTED]

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US Consul General in Curacao says Dutch military officer reports Libyan military personnel involved in recent fighting and are being sent home gradually.

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[REDACTED]

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